

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: Incentives to Quit



Remember the good old days when you could smoke just about everywhere? And cigarettes were cheap? Well, all that's changed over the past couple of decades. No more smoking at work and many other places.

Just about everyone you know would be happy if you quit. You hate it when someone points out how much money you are wasting on cigarettes. You really hate it when someone comments about the smell of your cigarette smoke. You get defensive when the doctor or someone else starts talking about tobacco-related heart disease or lung cancer. That won't happen to you! Your Uncle Milt smoked three packs a day until the day he died, at age 92!

You love your tobacco. The problem is them, not you. You don't see any reason to quit smoking. Or do you? Perhaps if you could have some quiet time for research and reflection, you could think rationally about your tobacco habit. Or, maybe the standard arguments won't work for you. Perhaps you haven't heard any of the following.

Extraordinary Reasons to Quit Using Tobacco

The Good

1. Your physical attractiveness will improve. Your teeth and fingers will be cleaner and your breath fresher. Your skin and hair will be less dry.
2. Physical performance will improve. With improved lung and cardiovascular function comes more energy and enthusiasm.
3. You will save money. For example, if you smoke two packs a day, that's about \$10. One year's worth of cigarettes costs you about \$3,650.
4. You can protect the health of the people you love. They didn't choose to smoke when you did, but they suffer some of the same health risks you have by your smoking. For example, even if you smoke outdoors, nicotine-containing particles stick to your hair and clothing. These particles rub off on furniture and other people's clothing. Research indicates that children whose parents smoke outside exclusively still carry measurable nicotine in their bodies. These children have twice as much nicotine in their bodies than children whose parents do not smoke.
5. The following changes take place in your body when you quit using tobacco. If someone you love is consistently exposed to your secondhand smoke, they will also experience some of these changes.
 - Twenty minutes after the last cigarette blood pressure, pulse rate, and body temperature in the hands and feet return to normal.
 - At eight hours, carbon monoxide and oxygen blood levels return to normal.
 - At twenty-four hours, the chance of heart attack begins to decrease.
 - At forty-eight hours, nerve endings begin to re-grow. The abilities to smell and taste increase. Food really smells and tastes good!
 - At seventy-two hours, all nicotine has washed out of the body.
 - At one to three months, circulation improves and lung function increases to 30%. Walking and other forms of moderate exercise are much easier.
 - At three to nine months, coughing, sinus problems, and shortness of breath markedly decrease. Cilia re-grow in the lungs, increasing the lungs' ability to clean out impurities. There is less fatigue. The body is better able to fight infection.
 - At one year, the risk of coronary heart disease has decreased 50%.
 - At five years, the risk of lung cancer death has decreased 50%.
 - At fifteen years, your risk of heart disease is the same as a person who never smoked!

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The Bad

1. Smokers with Alzheimer's Disease will lose mental abilities five times faster than non-smokers with the same disease.
2. Smokers are much more likely to get lupus erythematosus, a chronic autoimmune disease that causes inflammation, pain, and tissue damage.
3. Men who smoke more than a pack a day (and many smokeless tobacco users) are 60% more likely to have erectile dysfunction or impotence.
4. Women who smoke have much higher rates of breast cancer than women who do not. Women at greatest risk for breast cancer are those who started smoking before age 20 and continue to smoke more than a pack a day.
5. Smokers are four times more likely to become blind due to age-related macular degeneration.
6. People who smoke for more than twenty years are 70% more likely to have acid reflux disease.
7. The more people smoke, the more they snore. This leads to decrease in cardiovascular functioning and an increase in headaches, fatigue, and irritability. Nonsmokers are more likely to snore if they are exposed to secondhand smoke.

The Ugly

More and more research indicates that secondhand smoke creates significant health problems for the children of smokers.

- Children whose parents smoke are at higher risk for lung cancer (about a 50% higher risk) even if they do not smoke as adults.
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is twice as likely to occur in infants whose parents smoked during and after pregnancy.
- Babies with smoking mothers tend to have more colicky symptoms. Tobacco smoke appears to raise levels of the gut hormone motillin. This increases contractions of the stomach and intestines.
- Babies born to mothers who smoked during the pregnancy show signs of nicotine addiction. High levels of cotinine (the form nicotine takes in the body) are found in blood tests of these newborns.

What is your life like now? Do you have to put up with urgent tobacco cravings until break or lunch or the end of the movie or whatever? Do you plan your day around places and opportunities to smoke? Your addiction owns you. You can get your life back. Deciding to quit is the first step.

Talk to your doctor about quitting. South Dakota has a program to help you quit, the South Dakota QuitLine. The toll free number is 1-866-SD QUIT (1-866-737-8487), and the website is <http://www.befreesd.com/quitline.html>. The QuitLine can help with information, coaching, discounts on nicotine withdrawal products, and free professional advice.



For more information on tobacco cessation incentives, please visit:

<http://healthfully.org/tobacco/id1.html>

<http://www.ucanquit2.org/facts/QuitGain.aspx>